

~~SECRET~~

25X1



13 May 1966

No. 0816/66

Copy No. 112

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SOVIET VULNERABILITY TO CHINESE EXPLOITATION
OF MINORITY PROBLEMS IN THE USSR

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

~~SECRET~~

GROUP 1
Excluded from automatic
downgrading and
declassification

WARNING

This Document contains information affecting the National Defense of the United States, within the meaning of Title 18, Sections 793 and 794, of the U.S. Code, as amended. Its transmission or revelation of its contents to or receipt by an unauthorized person is prohibited by law. The reproduction of this form is prohibited.

SECRET

25X1

No. 0816/66

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
13 May 1966

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM*

Soviet Vulnerability to Chinese Exploitation
of Minority Problems in the USSR

1. In the mounting cold war between the Soviet Union and China, one important source of tension has been the Soviet Union's exploitation of discontent and anti-Chinese sentiment among the minorities which straddle the border. There is no evidence, however, that the Chinese have engaged in similar divisive activities among the non-Slavic minorities in the USSR. Although Moscow continues to be plagued with problems of dissidence and nationalistic sentiment among some of its minorities, there have been few situations capable of exploitation by the Chinese Communists in recent years. Peking, therefore, has concentrated on attempting to drive a wedge between the Kremlin leaders and the Soviet population as a whole. However, the Chinese--including Mao Tse-tung personally--made statements attacking the Soviet territorial annexations in Europe after World War II and have thus sought to incite some East European bloc regimes to stir up nationalistic feeling among the minorities on the Western borders of the USSR.

2. There is little question that the Soviet minorities, which constitute 45 percent of the population, continue to provide centers of resistance to the regime in Moscow, although the degree of unrest varies sharply from area to area. Ethnic national

*Prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence and coordinated with ONE.

SECRET

25X1

SECRET

25X1

feelings remain particularly strong in the Baltic, Western Ukraine, and Moldavia. These areas were all annexed relatively recently--during the Second World War--and memories of the pre-Soviet period are still fresh. Furthermore, these areas enjoyed a high standard of living which declined sharply after the Russian take-over. The Caucasian minorities with their ancient traditions also have a fiercely held sense of national identity. On the other hand, the backward minorities in the East, which have experienced the civilizing benefits of Soviet rule, tend to view Russian dominion with more favor.

3. In general, dissident sentiment among most of the minorities appears to be on the wane. Attention in the Soviet press to nationality problems has been at a minimum in the last two years. For instance, speakers at the 23rd party congress last month from the non-Russian areas gave hardly more than passing attention to this problem. The lack of public attention is a fairly good indication that there have been no serious outbursts in recent months.

4. One exception appears to have occurred in Moldavia (formerly the Bessarabian province of Rumania) where a shrill campaign against nationalist anti-Russian manifestations was waged throughout the past winter. Statements by local party and government officials made it clear that the increasingly independent and nationalistic stance taken by Rumania was creating restiveness among the population of Moldavia, 60 percent of which are Rumanians. There is clear evidence that China had encouraged Bucharest to press Moscow for the return of Bessarabia. Rumanian officials have been unwilling thus far to make a major issue of this matter, but have published documents and made public statements aimed at supporting Rumania's historic claim to Bessarabia. Moscow has shown marked sensitivity and defensiveness to the possible divisive influence of such propaganda on the Moldavians.

5. The minorities in Soviet Central Asia, many of whom inhabit both sides of the Sino-Soviet border, would seem to be the most fertile field for Chinese meddling. However, the Chinese are faced with a

SECRET

25X1

SECRET

25X1

number of obstacles in this area which prevent them from turning Moscow's problems to their own advantage. In the first place, no matter how badly off the Soviet minorities may be in that area, they are better off than their fellow tribesmen in China, and Moscow has been at pains to drive this point home. Somewhere between 25,000 and 100,000 non-Chinese left Sinkiang to settle in the USSR in 1962, and the Soviet regime has given extensive local publicity to their descriptions of the hard life in China.

6. In keeping with the Soviet policy of attempting to create in Soviet Central Asia a "show window" to entice the peoples of the East, special effort has been made to improve the living and cultural conditions of the minorities with kinsmen beyond the border and provide them with at least the trappings of national identity. A case in point is the Uighurs. There are about 93,000 Uighurs in the Soviet Union and over four million in Sinkiang. The Soviet Uighurs fled across the border from China in the 1880s after an attempted revolt against Chinese rule was put down. They have since been a valuable asset to the Russians in extending Soviet influence into neighboring China. With an eye to the large audience across the border, the Soviet regime has provided its Uighur minority with an unusually large number of cultural institutions--five native-language newspapers, a radio-broadcasting station, a teachers training college and several Uighur-language theaters. Because of their deep-seated dislike of the Chinese, there is little likelihood that the Chinese can exploit them in reverse.

7. Despite the relatively favored treatment of many of the minorities in Soviet Central Asia, considerable anti-Russian sentiment continues to exist. Much of the good will engendered by the material and cultural benefits under Russian rule has been all but nullified by the Kremlin's attack on the traditional Moslem way of life and by the overriding consideration given to the rapid industrialization of the area. Russian policy in Central Asia is basically a colonial one and has all the ingredients for tension and friction inherent in colonialism the world over. In

SECRET

25X1

SECRET

25X1

theory, the creation of nominally sovereign republics, representing the main language groups, has provided the indigenous inhabitants with an outlet for their latent nationalist aspirations. In practice, Russians run these countries. This has been most blatantly evident in Kazakhstan, and as a result friction between Russians and the native elements in this republic reached serious proportions in recent years.

3. The basic cause was the massive influx of Slavs into the republic in connection with Khrushchev's ambitious New Lands program and other crash projects to exploit the natural resources in the area. Until recently a clear majority of the population, the Kazakhs are now outnumbered by Slavs two to one. Conversely, the Uzbeks--long the most favored of the larger Central Asian minorities--outnumber the Russians in their republic by five to one. Nationalistically minded Kazakhs, seeing their cultural identity and way of life being submerged under the wave of incoming Russians, have formed a center of resistance which has caused Moscow much concern in recent years. In late 1962, for instance, Moscow conducted a major purge of high-level Kazakh party and government officials on charges of nepotism, corruption, and nationalist deviations--the latter charge was clearly the crux of the problem. There do not appear to have been any serious incidents since, but tension still exists.

9. There is no evidence that the Chinese Communists have made any attempt to capitalize on the Kremlin's difficulties with its Kazakh minority or to foster racial tension in the area. There has been no significant increase in Chinese minority-language broadcasting to the area, and the content of local broadcasts which can be received on the Soviet side of the border continue to be devoid of material aimed at fomenting nationalist sentiments. There are perhaps two additional reasons why the Chinese have so far shown restraint in this matter. One is that they are more vulnerable than the Soviet Union to such activity. Furthermore, while the Chinese undoubtedly could attempt to exacerbate Moscow's problems with the Central Asian minorities, it seems unlikely that they could turn resentment against the Russians into pro-Chinese sentiments.

SECRET

25X1

SECRET

25X1

10. Although there may be some potential for exploitation, Chinese capabilities are limited. However, the Chinese might take some actions as a countermove against any significant renewal of Soviet subversion among their own minorities. Perhaps partly with an eye to this possibility, the new Soviet leadership has taken a number of measures which should help to mollify Central Asian nationalist sensitivities. At the recent 23rd party congress a Kazakh national, the party boss of the republic, was elected to the ruling Politburo and a number of Khrushchev's unpopular organizational innovations, such as the Central Asian party Bureau and the Virgin Lands Kray, have been disbanded.

SECRET

25X1

SECRET

SECRET